

In my first post, I reflected on how the characters in *The Lemon Tree* all seem to be victims of external circumstances. In Chapters 4-7, we begin to see these characters take on a different kind of agency. The choices they make, and the decisions made by Jews and Palestinians more broadly during this time period, lay the foundation for some of the differences between the two peoples that persist to this day.

These chapters cover a time period that roughly correlates to the 1948 War (Israel's War of Independence, the Palestinian *Nakba*) and its aftermath. It details the Khairi family's expulsion from Ramla and their adoption of refugee life. The Khairis became some of the approximately 750,000 refugees created in the war. We also learn about the Eshkenazi family's experience as immigrants, soldiers, and civilians in a new country.

While the characters all experience individual agency, it seems that only the Jews are organized in a way that allows them to act as a collective. The Haganah, Palmach, Irgun, and Stern Gang are all mentioned as Israeli paramilitary groups, and we also learn about the Jewish Agency, a pre-state quasi-government that made for an easy transition to statehood. Yet there are no comparable Palestinian institutions. The Arab military forces in the war are those of Jordan, Egypt, and other sovereign nations, and we do not hear about anything being done at the civic level to organize Palestinian society for statehood.

There are reasons why this was the case, most notably Palestinian rejection of British or Jewish authority over any piece of the land of Palestine; but this choice had dire consequences. Both during and after the war, there was no one looking out for the Palestinian people. This early difference in collective agency created a massive rift between Jews and Palestinians that in many ways persists to this day.

Questions:

- 1) What might explain the discrepancy between Jewish and Palestinian organization during this time period? Were Palestinians offered similar opportunities to organize themselves?
- 2) Why do you think the Israeli government felt compelled to keep Palestinians from their homes and crops? Do you think there were viable alternatives?
- 3) How do you think this is impacting the relationship between the Khairi and Eshkenazi families?